

critics, and provided stability and strength to the nation during periods of civil strife and uncertainty, panics and depressions. In war and in peace, it has been the sure refuge and protector of the rights of the states and of a political minority. And, today, the Senate still stands—the great forum of constitutional American liberty!"

TRIBUTE TO LARRY PRESSLER

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, earlier today, we witnessed the oath of office being given to the new junior Senator from South Dakota, the Honorable TIM JOHNSON. I join with all my colleagues in welcoming him to the U.S. Senate. I wish him well. However, I do want to take a moment to pay tribute to the gentleman he succeeded—a man of integrity, of kindness, and of singular achievement—Senator Larry Pressler.

I have known Larry Pressler throughout his entire 22 year career of public service in the Congress, beginning with his first election to the House of Representatives in 1974. Though a young man when he first took the oath of Office, he already had distinguished himself in other fields—as student body president at the University of South Dakota, a Rhodes Scholar, a U.S. Army Lieutenant in Vietnam, and a Harvard Law and Kennedy School graduate.

I knew then that the people of South Dakota had sent an exceptional human being. I didn't realize how right I was at the time. In 1978, he was elected to the Senate—the first of several Vietnam veterans we are honored to call our Senate colleagues. For 18 years—three terms in office—he served the Senate, his State and his country ably and responsibly.

All who know or have known Larry Pressler are keenly aware how much he holds public service in high regard. He considers it his life's calling, and he certainly responded well to the call. He knows that effective public service begins with public trust at home—the faith that he chose to represent their views and interests in Washington will do so with honor and integrity. Little did Larry know that not long after he came to the Senate, that basic principle of public trust would be put to the test. It would come in the form of FBI agents posing as Arab sheiks who attempted to bribe Larry as part of their so-called ABSCAM investigation. Larry strongly refused. His response drew national acclaim. The Federal District Judge who presided over the trial singled out Larry's action, stating that he "acted as citizens have a right to expect their elected representatives to act."

That single act, perhaps more than any other, capsulized and defined the values of Larry Pressler—the values he was brought up to practice first on his father's farm in Humboldt, SD, and the same values he practiced every day for 22 years in Congress. Just as important, his action during ABSCAM reminded all of us of that vital link between effective public service and sustained public trust.

Public trust was not just a core value Larry Pressler practiced in his own life, but a basic principle he sought to instill in government practice. He worked overtime to be sure South Dakotans were treated fairly by the Federal Government, whether it was as routine as a timely Social Security check, or as complex as environmental protection enforcement.

Larry was the first to oppose President Clinton's nomination of Zoe Baird because he sensed early on that her past actions damaged the level of public trust needed in our Nation's chief law enforcement officer. He was right.

Larry has been a superb watchdog of Federal agencies that oversee air safety because of his concern both for the safety and security of air travelers, and the faith travelers place in these agencies and carriers to ensure their safety. He was right on the mark again.

Larry also has been an outspoken champion of our efforts to reform the cancerous corruption and waste that has infected the United Nations to the point of near ineffectiveness. As a supporter of the United Nations, Larry is concerned that continued United Nations mismanagement would erode the public's support and trust in the world body. Some people in the United Nations are listening. Indeed, largely because of the persistence and diligence of our friend and former colleague from South Dakota, the United Nations today now has an inspector general to investigate waste, fraud and abuse, and is beginning to take seriously this body's demands for real, concrete reform.

Persistence and diligence—that best describes the style of Larry Pressler's approach to public service, and it has paid off for the State of South Dakota and the Nation. His last campaign slogan was "Fighting and Winning for South Dakota." That's a good example of truth in advertising. Whether it was rail service or air service, wheat prices or cattle prices, Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City or the EROS Data Center in Sioux Falls, Larry Pressler fought and won for South Dakota.

Internationally, Larry Pressler is known and respected for his efforts on nuclear nonproliferation, and human rights causes in China, Cyprus, Armenia, Turkey, and Kosova. I'm sure there are many around the world who will miss Larry Pressler's commitment to these and other important causes.

But perhaps Larry Pressler's greatest achievements as a Senator came in his last 2 years in office, when he served as chairman of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. Chairman Pressler presided over one of the most productive and bipartisan periods of legislating by a single Senate committee perhaps in the history of this body. At the end of the 104th Congress, I had the opportunity to detail this extraordinary record of accomplishment. Chairman Pressler reported 97 bills and resolutions out of the Commerce Committee—more than any other Senate

Committee during the 140th Congress. Of those, 87 became law.

Of that 87, perhaps the most heralded was the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the most important economic growth legislation to become law in a decade. This piece of legislation was Larry Pressler's life for well over a year.

It's fair to say that the Telecommunications Act would not be law today if not for Larry Pressler. It passed with extraordinary support because Larry Pressler took the time to work with virtually every Member of Congress—House and Senate—to see that their concerns were addressed. He demonstrated bipartisanship, fairness as well as toughness, but perhaps most important are the two qualities I mentioned earlier—persistence and diligence.

Those qualities also were shared by Larry Pressler's staff. Indeed, both his personal and committee staff deserve a tribute and our thanks as well. They were a great team. Many are from South Dakota. Many have served with Larry Pressler for more than a decade. Several for as long as he was a Senator and a select few even worked for him in the House. Larry, one of our more regular participants at our weekly Senate Bible study, often joked that Abraham died leaning on his staff. Well, it's safe to say Larry Pressler succeeded leaning on his staff. I know Larry Pressler is very proud of all his dedicated staff. I also know that all the staff are proud of Larry Pressler—proud to have worked with him and for the people of South Dakota.

They are not alone. All of us are proud to have worked with our distinguished colleague from South Dakota. I say this not just as a colleague, but as a dear friend. My wife, Tricia, and I have enjoyed the countless times we have spent with Larry, his lovely wife, Harriet and their wonderful daughter, Laura. I am hopeful there will be many more good times ahead.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: "Vitality shows in not only the ability to persist but the ability to start over." I have seen the vitality of Larry Pressler as a persistent and dedicated public servant for his state and nation. I am confident Larry will demonstrate that same vitality as he starts a new, a private life that will bring professional success and personal satisfaction.

So today, Larry Pressler finds himself in a position all of us will be placed in—a point where past service is subject not to the approval of voters but to the scrutiny of history. Mr. President, it is safe to say history will treat Larry Pressler quite well, and will see him as we do—as a model public servant. To paraphrase the words of Saint Paul known and referred to often by my friend from South Dakota, Larry Pressler stayed the course, fought the good fight and kept the faith.